



July 25, 1997

Superfund Fact Sheet

Commencement Bay Nearshore/Tideflats Superfund Site

Thea Foss and Wheeler Osgood Waterways

Tacoma, Washington

Thea Foss and Wheeler Osgood PRP Search Nears Completion

In January 1997, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) issued approximately 140 questionnaires, known as 104(e) information request letters, to parties that currently or formerly owned property or operated businesses in the area of the Thea Foss and Wheeler Osgood Waterways. Since that time, EPA has received and reviewed nearly 100 responses, identifying 59 parties as potentially liable for contamination in the waterways. On July 25, 1997, EPA sent letters to these parties, notifying them of their potential liability. **Parties who did not receive these letters are no longer under consideration as Potentially Responsible Parties (PRPs). Parties who have not been notified are unlikely to be notified in the future unless new information causes EPA to re-examine its findings.** A list of the parties notified is attached.

PRP Search Background

In 1989, the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) sent letters to 33 potentially responsible parties (PRPs). The letters notified them of their potential liability for the cleanup of the Thea Foss and Wheeler Osgood portion of the Commencement Bay Nearshore/Tideflats Superfund site.

In January of this year, after a complete review of the available information, EPA identified 32 additional PRPs, and requested new and updated information in relation to the Thea Foss and Wheeler Osgood Waterways from these parties. Under Superfund law, these parties are

considered potentially responsible and may be held liable for costs incurred, including those related to investigations, planning, studies and cleanup. Potentially responsible parties at Thea Foss and Wheeler Osgood include current and former owners and operators of businesses along the waterways and parties that arranged for disposal of hazardous substances at facilities along the waterways.

In addition to issuing letters to the 32 new PRPs, information requests were also sent out to 82 additional parties asking for information relating to their activities on the waterways. Specifically, EPA asked them to identify the nature and quantity of materials which have been or are currently generated, treated, disposed of, or stored at their facilities or properties, or other facilities or properties in the Thea Foss and Wheeler Osgood portions of the Commencement Bay site. These letters did not name the parties as PRPs, but simply requested information to be used by EPA in making such a determination. Such information requests were also sent to the 33 PRPs identified in 1989 in order to obtain updated information concerning these parties.

Upon review of the responses obtained to the information requests, and all other information available to EPA, 13 additional PRPs were identified. EPA also re-evaluated the PRP status of some of the PRPs identified in 1989 and January 1997, as some of these parties were dissolved or no longer exist, or new information was obtained. As a result, there are currently 59 PRPs identified for the Thea Foss and Wheeler Osgood Waterways.

The final number of PRPs may be adjusted as EPA continues its efforts to gather information on a limited number of parties which may be current or historical sources of contamination to the Waterways. New information regarding parties which are currently not under consideration by EPA as PRPs may also be obtained.

Site Background

The Thea Foss Waterway is one of the largest waterways at the Commencement Bay site with approximately 3 miles of shoreline. Numerous types of industries have operated along both the Thea Foss and Wheeler Osgood Waterways since the early 1900's. The Wheeler Osgood Waterway is one of the smaller waterways of Commencement Bay and is appended to the Thea Foss Waterway, lying in a southeasterly direction.

The west shore of the Thea Foss Waterway is largely owned by the City of Tacoma through the Metropolitan Parks District. The east shore is owned by numerous companies. Past operations on the Waterways include maritime industries, foundries, electroplating, woodworking, and plywood factories, as well as oil companies, and a coal gasification/electricity plant. The Waterways are also impacted by significant stormwater flows from stormdrains that drain over 5,000 acres of upland commercial and residential land. Over the years, these operations have led to the contamination of bottom sediments which are harmful to marine life in the waterways.

Questions?

If you have questions regarding the information in this fact sheet or want more information on this site, please contact:

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